

Before You And After You

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Before You And After You

by [Metaphysicalash](#)

Summary

After escaping Baltimore, Hannibal and Will are now living in Zurich. With new identities and new jobs. It's been a month now, and unlike the chameleon Hannibal was, able to adjust anywhere, Will has a hard time adapting to the new place. New life. Despite the ordeals he'd faced back home, he still misses Virginia. He misses the old job. At the same time, he doesn't want to leave Hannibal. He wants both, despite knowing it's not possible.

Their new home isn't devoid of its own secrets. Over the month, Hannibal had already built a reputation for himself — as a psychiatrist and a serial killer. Turns out, he isn't the only serial killer in Zurich. He and Will encounter another threat. Things take a turn for the worse, and they're put between life and death.

Will needs to decide if a life with Hannibal would be worth the risks. He doesn't have a lot of time, and there's no turning back.

Notes

This is my second Hannibal fic, and it's a sequel to the first fic I wrote - 'Inescapable'. If you haven't read that one, do check it out.

Content warning - Since it's a Hannibal fic, there's of course violence and blood, serial killers and other mature themes. Some graphic content and brief mention of mental illness. Just giving you guys a heads-up

The fic has been mostly beta'd but if there are any inconsistencies/errors, I'm sorry! 🙏
Shoutout to my lovely beta [@chaotic-inkme](#) on tumblr

- Inspired by [Inescapable](#) by [Metaphysicalash](#)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

Digital art by me via my Tumblr - odetolove95



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Any average person would tell Will Graham that visiting Switzerland, let alone living there, was hella expensive. And he would concur, since he wasn't rich, and he preferred his cozy home in Wolf Trap, with his dogs. It wasn't that he was against luxury because he'd been to Lecter's home, his office, and his cliff house, and he'd liked those places (he would've enjoyed the cliff house had it not been for Dolarhyde). But he wouldn't be able to afford a place as opulent as those anywhere in the world for the life of him.

Thankfully, he didn't have to pay a dime. Hannibal had taken them to Zürich and he'd also taken care of all the formalities. The contacts he had there set him up with a nice house, new passports, and everything. The house was a beautiful contemporary architecture that Will couldn't help admiring. The interiors had hardwood floors and white walls with wood accents, spacious rooms, and comfy white sofas with grey cushions. Even the large balcony, overlooking a beautiful view of the neighborhood, had a small sofa of its own. Along with a coffee table and chairs.

It wasn't limited to that. Hannibal went one step forward and adopted a husky, a golden retriever and a Bernese mountain dog for Will, just to make sure he felt at home. Because it might be a beautiful place but he hadn't quite adjusted to it.

Speaking of those new passports, Hannibal's contacts had chosen their new identities for them, with perhaps a few suggestions from Hannibal. He had picked the name Lucius for

himself, while Will's new identity was Adam. And their surnames were the same—Preston.

*Lucius and Adam Preston. Newlyweds.* There was even a marriage certificate to prove it, one that was created to such perfection that even the best minds wouldn't doubt it.

*Of course* Hannibal would never let the opportunity go. *Of course* he would declare them both husbands. The first time Will took a look at his passport, he raised his brows at him and said, 'really?' to which Hannibal simply responded with a smug smile. A smile that reflected his satisfaction at having made Will officially his, even if by forgery.

Hannibal thought the name Adam suited him. Will didn't complain. Some part of him was flattered that Hannibal wanted him to be his husband. The man even got them shiny gold rings.

As for their professions, Hannibal unsurprisingly was a psychiatrist again with his fake identity, as well as a part time art enthusiast. Will was an art curator, a role he indifferently accepted. However, a part of him did miss the gritty and morbidly thrilling job of a profiler. Of course, anyone would find that interest creepy but it was something he knew best. He was good at it. His inner empath missed the good old times.

Unlike him, Hannibal didn't have to miss anything. His urges were still intact, and he had already made a reputation for himself in Zürich like he did in Florence. The *Il Mostro* of Florence was now *The Monster of Zürich*. Police were after the monster but didn't know who he was yet.

Some of Hannibal's contacts consisted of wealthy, influential people who could vouch for him. And he made some new friends along the way in similar positions. He surely knew how to adapt. Will, on the other hand, needed time to adjust to all of that. He managed to befriend some people living a block away from the house, and sometimes helped with repairing their leaky pipes, busted car engines, among other things.

He was occupied with repairing a bike engine, on a carpet, in the middle of the spacious living room, one fine day. He lay on the floor, legs stretched out like some male model, peering at the gears as he repaired them.

The front door opened and closed. Will didn't notice Hannibal until he came into the living room. He glanced up to see him staring at him with a smile and a raised brow, wearing a black trench coat, grey scarf.

"Of all the things I'd imagined seeing in my living room," Hannibal said. "I never imagined it would be an engine. Good to know you're making friends."

"Helps with making this place less foreign. The neighbors like the dogs too," Will replied. "I don't have the natural talent of blending in the way you do."

"I think I've said this before. I prefer you this way. Standing apart from everyone else."

"Of course you do."

“Adapting takes time. I’m sure you’ll get accustomed to this place soon.”

Will continued tinkering with the piece of machinery. When he sensed Hannibal hadn’t moved from his spot, he looked up to see him still staring—or rather—checking him out.

“Need something?” Will asked.

The Bernese mountain dog ran up to Hannibal, circling his legs and wagging its tail. He bent to pet it.

“Lecter,” Will said. “Come here.”

Hannibal glanced at him, and took a second to realize he wasn’t addressing him. The dog immediately turned and went to Will.

Hannibal raised his brows again. “This clearly amuses you.”

“I told you once before, at least this way I get to tell you what to do,” Will replied.

He pet the dog before rising to his feet. The dogs went over to their beds and curled up in them.

Wiping his hands clean with a cloth, he dropped it near the machinery. He saw Hannibal’s eyes dart towards the cloth. He knew how disciplined the man was, how neat and clean he kept everything around him.

“Don’t worry,” he said, walking to him. “I’ll clean it up.”

Hannibal then eyed Will’s glasses, which made him look undoubtedly adorable. “Regardless of the reasons you wore glasses before, I still like you with them.”

“So you like me lesser without them?”

“Never said that.”

“I know.” Will stopped an inch away from him. “How were your clients today?”

“Fascinating. The madness always is.”

“I’m sure. You always had a taste for the criminally minded.”

Before Hannibal could say more, Will silenced him with a kiss, slow and delicious. Lips melting into each other, tongues playing.

“Is there a reason behind this special welcome?” Hannibal murmured.

“Should there be a reason to kiss my husband?” Will asked.

“No.”

“You call me a cunning boy, yet you’re the one who so deviously forged a marriage certificate. Was that your way of saying I’m yours and no one else’s?”

“Couldn’t miss the opportunity. Would you?”

“I would actually have a proper wedding first. Privately, of course.”

“We could have one if you want.”

Will kissed him again, before pulling his scarf from his neck and tossing it aside.

“Take your clothes off,” he whispered.

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With a smirk, Will took his glasses off and walked towards the fireplace. Coming home and finding him lying on the carpet like a damn male model and fixing a bike engine had effectively turned Hannibal on already. It was like Will knew exactly what buttons to push, and it didn’t take much for him to capture Hannibal’s heart.

Hannibal toed his shoes off and pushed them aside with his feet, then took his coat and beanie off as he walked to him, followed by his navy suit. Then his socks. All the while having this subtle smile on his face. He undid the first few buttons of his shirt.

Will stood facing the fireplace, and Hannibal went up to him from behind, snaking his arms around his waist. Will leaned his head back against Hannibal’s shoulder as the other dragged his lips from his neck up to his cheek before nibbling his earlobe. As Will turned his head to kiss him, Hannibal drew his shirt up, feeling his body before undoing his jeans. The button snapped, and he tugged down his zipper. Slipping his fingers inside the waistband, he felt the hardened length of his cock.

Will let out a sigh.

In spite of all the times they made love in the past month, it still felt like new each time. Maybe because their transition into an actual relationship was fairly new too. Will was a drug Hannibal couldn't get enough of, a habit he couldn't break. He had to restrain himself sometimes from touching and feeling him like he did now, else he would never go to work. He'd spend hours making love to him instead.

And damn, every time they did it, it sent Hannibal's brain spinning out of control. Sometimes he'd feel the wild urge to rip Will's clothing to shreds and get down hard and fast. Like right now.

He fisted Will's cock, relishing every moan he let out, while his own erection strained against his trousers. Spinning him around, Hannibal pushed him backward against the wall, taking his lips in a rough kiss. It lacked finesse, but he didn't care. He pushed up Will's Henley, and Will broke contact to draw his shirt over his head and drop it to the floor. Will untucked and unbuttoned Hannibal's shirt, then went for his trousers. He kissed him sloppily in between, unable to do it properly in the haste of getting rid of their clothes.

Once they were completely naked, they got down on the carpet. The fireplace provided some comfort from the cold. Will's skin felt warm and smooth to the touch. He slid his fingers in Hannibal's hair, exhaling as the man kissed his collarbone.

Days like these were worth looking forward to. Hannibal could spend hours in his office, speaking to patient after patient, dealing with a myriad of mental illnesses, of dark urges and desires. In the short breaks he got in between appointments, he would sketch away in his book, drawing pictures of Will and him, mostly erotic ones, over and over.

Or he would simply draw Will—sitting, standing, reading, staring into the distance—any image of him he could visualize in his vivid mind. Those were the only ways he could distract himself from that constant longing deep down in his core.

He was mad about Will. So much he could hardly take it.

So, he always looked forward to coming home just so he could hold and kiss him again.

Hannibal gently tugged Will's nipple between his lips, hearing him moan—then sucked on the hard point. He did the same to his other nipple, while he let his hands caress Will's hips, trail along his pelvis, to his hardened erection. He palmed it, stroking its length. Will tugged his hair, pulling him up to kiss him. Their lips met in a hot-blooded kiss, where Will pushed back fiercely, as if consumed by a feral desire. He broke the contact and exhaled a sharp breath over Hannibal's mouth as Hannibal stroked his balls.

"Come in me," he breathed.

There was definitely a shift in Will that happened over the course of the month. Hannibal remembered the first time they made love, in that cabin, when Will had finally opened himself up, yet was slightly hesitant.

Now, those reservations were gone, as if Will had broken his shackles and let go of everything that held him back. He bared himself to Hannibal completely, body and soul, and expressed his desires freely. It made Hannibal happy that the man showed the same passion for him as he did.

“Hannibal,” Will whispered. “Let me feel you.”

*He certainly knew how to arouse anyone with mere words.*

And how could Hannibal not give in?

He kissed Will’s soft lips, feeling his stubble lightly abrade his skin.

Then he thrust into him, watching his jaw drop and his eyes flutter shut with the utmost pleasure. He listened to the tempting sounds that escaped his mouth with every thrust. Hannibal pinned his wrists right above his head with one hand while clasping his thigh with the other. He plunged inside him, hard and deep.

“Oh,” Will groaned. “Kiss me.”

Hannibal did. Their bodies, hot and heavy, rubbed against each other. Will’s cock was pressed against Hannibal’s stomach. The pressure and the sensual friction alone was enough to bring him closer to climax. His sensitive muscles fit snug around Hannibal’s cock, milking him.

Hannibal let go of his wrists and gripped his body so he could go faster, nailing Will’s prostate.

“Ah, God! Come on,” Will held his face, urging him on. “Come on.”

Hannibal couldn’t look away for a second. He didn’t want to. And from the way Will held him in place, he didn’t *want* him to look away either. It was like he wanted him to see him lose control. Or maybe the other way around.

It was only in moments like these, Hannibal would lose all his coherence, his ability to think. Such things never happened at any other time, since he always kept his wits about him. But when he was this intimate with Will, all that vanished. All his five senses focused on him and nothing else.

He clasped Will’s shoulder blade while the other hugged him, their lips brushing against each other. He slammed into him once, twice, thrice before release found him. He stiffened, throwing his head back and plunging deep inside Will as the hot flow of his climax gushed inside him. He felt Will’s body tense under him, felt his grip tighten around him, and his warm spurt over their stomachs.

Their bodies fell limp, and Will drew labored breaths as Hannibal rode out the orgasm with slow thrusts. He kissed him fervently while pumping into him. When he was done, he let his head drop to Will’s chest, breathing heavily.

Will let out a short, breathy laugh. “Clearly, I wasn’t the only one who wanted that. The hours felt too long waiting for you to come home.”

“Feeling’s mutual,” Hannibal replied, sliding a hand in his husband’s curly hair, which had grown a little longer during the month. He liked it.

“I don’t mean to complain, but the floor's cold.”

Hannibal swallowed, gathering himself before he pulled out of him. “Give me a moment.”

He moved off him and slowly rose to his feet. He walked to the stairs, and as he went up, he saw Will lying on his side on the carpet like something out of an erotic painting, staring at him, with his flushed and glistening cock curved up to his navel. So raw, beautiful, and goddamn perfect. Hannibal thought of drawing him in that pose sometime. He went to the bedroom, and took out a couple of sweaters, warm pajamas from the large wardrobe, a blanket, then went back down. On the way to Will, he grabbed some tissues from the coffee table in front of the sofa. He handed some to him, then used the rest to clean himself. He disposed off all the tissues before handing Will a knitted button-down sweater along with a pajama.

Will sat up and put the clothes on. The plunging neckline of the sweater revealed a part of his collarbone and his chest. Hannibal put his clothes on and they moved to sit near the fireplace. Will sat in front of him, head pillowed on his shoulder, and Hannibal wrapped the blanket around them.

“Better now?” he asked.

“Much,” Will sighed, snuggling close. “I’m curious. I know you can be professional when you need to, put your focus on your patients, but...” he turned his head to look at him. “I want to know if I’m not the only one who thinks about you the entire day.”

Hannibal smacked his lips softly. *If only he knew how he constantly possessed my mind.*

“You never escape my thoughts.”

Will’s voice was now an alluring whisper. “Is that so?”

“Yes.” Hannibal slid a hand through the neckline of Will's sweater, and pressed a hand to his bare chest, right on his heart. “I close my eyes and imagine you vividly when I’m alone. The way you feel...”

Will craned his neck up, exhaling slowly, arching his chest a little to his touch.

Hannibal’s lips brushed against his ear as he spoke, “The beating of your heart.” He stroked his chest, then skimmed down his pec, his palm brushing his nipple. He gave it a gentle squeeze. “I think about you all the time, and more often than not, it’s distracting. I have to divert my mind to my patients or else...”

Will leaned his lips towards his. “Or else?”

“You’ll drive me mad.”

Will grinned for a split-second before Hannibal sealed his mouth. He cradled his face, holding it in place while he deepened the kiss. *Warm, intoxicating, passionate.* Will was completely into it as Hannibal was, and each pushed back with fervor, as if trying to one-up the other. However, it didn't last very long because the next moment, Will broke the contact, and the look his eyes changed. His gaze flitted dejectedly towards the fireplace.

"Something's troubling you," Hannibal said.

There was a pause. "I want you to be my therapist for a few minutes."

"Alright," said Lecter. "What do you want to talk about?"

"Home. Virginia."

It wasn't surprising to Hannibal. He expected this sooner or later. He noticed Will's struggle to adapt to Zürich, and the extra time he spent with the dogs just to feel better. He noticed, even if Will thought he didn't.

"I know I can't go back," Will added. "But that doesn't stop me from feeling homesick. I knew that life, in all its darkness, insanity, and brutality. It was familiar to me. I was good at my job, and I had friends. Friends I lost after you came."

"They never understood you, Will. Never understood your gifts."

"So you weeded them out of my life."

"I accepted you as you were. You said it yourself once, you knew yourself better around me."

"That I did. Everything that happened, I dealt with it the best I could. And my home was my comfort, my refuge from the madness. Here, it's all so... strange. Foreign. It's like I'm stranded on an alien planet and I'm the odd one out. Please don't say you like it that way because I don't. I was used to that life."

"We tend to romanticize the past. View it in more positive light than it actually was. We are naturally biased to positive memories, so we ignore the pain and suffering we had been through then. The *fading effect* as it's called. You had endured suffering in your life there, yet you turn a blind eye to that."

"I have endured, yes, but I also survived. I built my strength over it. I often consider the possibility that maybe I could explain myself, find a way to get that life back. It might not be the way it was but at least, I'd be home."

Hannibal didn't have that possibility. Even a sliver of it. He couldn't go back, and the thought of losing his beloved unsettled him.

"What would you hope to find there?" he said. "If it's forgiveness, you won't find it. They see you as a fugitive now. Nothing else. Even if you had the chance to return, you won't have a life."

"What if I did? What if I could persuade Jack?"

“Do you believe your friendship with him holds that strength? That he would be open to persuasion?”

“He would listen. Even if there’s an infinitesimal chance, I would consider it.”

“If you go back, you would lose the things that make you feel like yourself. You would be living a lie, all over again, unable to express yourself or have the freedom to be who you really are.”

“You mean I would lose you. Everything you say sounds like the truth, yet I can’t tell if you’re trying to manipulate me.”

“I only want what’s best for you.”

“No, you want me here with you. You would never let me go in the first place.”

“But you would.”

“If I wanted to let you go, I wouldn’t be talking to you about any of this. I would just pack my bags and leave. The fact that I’m incapable of staying away from you is the very reason I’m in this predicament, and it’s difficult for me.”

Hannibal fell silent. He sometimes failed to win in an argument with Will. Deep down, he knew he was right. Despite the heat back home, Jack Crawford had somewhat of a soft spot for Will. If nothing else, he would at least listen to whatever Will had to say, and with the right kind of persuasion, he may help him out somehow too. It was Hannibal who didn’t have a chance to go back. He didn’t want to, either. He was used to being the bad guy, and to run. In that sense, it was natural for Will to feel like he didn’t belong.

He was right about another thing—Hannibal wanted him here. After so long, they had finally gotten together. He refused to let anything ruin that. He believed Will could adapt. He just needed time.

Hannibal snapped out of his thoughts and realized his husband hadn’t spoken for a few moments.

“Will,” he murmured.

He glanced at him, only to find him sound asleep. Snoring softly. He slowly removed the blanket off him and moved away, so he could carry him in his arms. He took him to the large sofa-bed, placing him on it before lying down next to him with the blanket.

As Will slept, Hannibal stroked his hair lightly. He couldn’t give him up, and he would do anything for that. He didn’t care if it was selfish. It wouldn’t be the first time he was. It gave him a sense of reassurance to know Will wasn’t ready to let him go either. That was all the motivation he needed.

He might give up a lot of things if necessary, but not Will Graham.

*Never.*



## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

Digital art by me, via my Tumblr - odetolove95

### Chapter Notes

There are some mentions of historical paintings. I don't know anything about historical paintings, so if I got any facts wrong, I'm so sorry! 🙏 They're only briefly mentioned

Digital art by me. You can find all my art on my instagram - monochrome\_\_queen and my Twitter - Winter\_Rose8



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Will expected Hannibal to have left, since the man always woke up early and kept to a routine. Being disciplined as he was, he was always particular about time.

But this time, Will awoke to find him lying next to him. He had always known Hannibal liked to watch him sleep, so it was quite rare for it to be the other around for once. Will shifted to his side to face him, taking in his warm breaths. Strands of his salt and pepper hair fell on the pillow.

He was hopelessly drawn to him. It was like Bedelia said—

Can't live with him. Can't live without him.

At this point, Will was weighing more on the latter. Even though he was homesick, he still didn't have the heart to leave Hannibal. He wanted him to come back with him, but he also knew that was impossible, considering the risks. When he helped him escape prison, he didn't want him to get caught again. He took a chance and ran away with him because he wanted to.

Unable to hold himself back, Will reached to touch his face. At the lightest touch, Hannibal's eyes opened to look at him. Almost as if he was pretending to be asleep the whole time.

"Thought you left for work," Will whispered.

"I wanted to wake up with you," Hannibal replied, taking Will's hand from his face and pressing his lips to his wrist. "Also, I have the day off."

"Good morning then, Dr. Lecter."

"Good morning... Adam."

"Right. We don't need those identities in here."

"I'm going out in the evening to get us dinner."

As simple as that sentence was, only Will knew what that really meant. Hannibal would usually take off for a few hours during the evenings, and return with neatly wrapped packs of meat. He never knew where he went and never questioned about it either. Now, his curiosity got the better of him. He'd seen Hannibal in action before but not exactly witnessed him carrying out his rituals. Hannibal usually did it alone.

"I'm coming with you," Will said. "If that's not a problem."

"Why would it be?" Hannibal smiled. "I would love that. But I need to do this one on my own."

"You think I can't hold my own?"

"I think you're capable of so many things. That's not the reason."

"Suit yourself then. I have an art gallery to go to."

Will pressed a kiss to his lips before getting off the sofa.

"I'll see you after," Hannibal said.

Their three dogs ran up to them, wagging their tails. Charlie, the Golden Retriever, nuzzled his nose near Hannibal's face. The man hadn't had pets before but he had grown accustomed to them after living with his dog-loving husband.

Winter, the Husky, stood on his hind legs, with his furry paws on Will's chest.

"I'm starting to think the dogs get a lot more attention," Hannibal said.

"Why? You jealous?" Graham gave him a sidelong glance.

Hannibal raised a brow.

Being in the art gallery somehow brought back memories of seeing art pieces in Hannibal's office back in Baltimore. It made Will nostalgic. It was also reminiscent of the time they met at the Uffizi gallery. He could visualize Hannibal sitting in a corner, sketching in his book, glancing up in between at the painting in front of him, the one he was copying.

The art gallery was the closest thing to home Will could feel. He'd often find himself staying back for a while after closing hours just staring at the paintings and reliving memories. Going back in his memory palace to that large office with leather armchairs, and that haunting stag statue.

He knew *something* about art, but not as much as Hannibal. Needless to say, Hannibal was more than happy to talk about art in great lengths, enough for Will to pick up a thing or two... or several. It was the reason why he was able to work at the gallery.

Dressed in a trim suit, shirt and trousers, he guided tourists around, speaking to them about the paintings, explaining the stories behind them. He had a natural ability to grab people's interests. A lot of them liked his way of thinking.

As he spoke to an elderly couple, he noticed a sharply dressed man with his hands in his trouser pockets smile at him before turning to look at Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione's painting of *'Diogenes Looking For A Honest Man'*.

Another tourist.

Once Will was done speaking with the couple, he thanked them and went over to the man.

"I don't suppose you want a tour," he said.

"No," the man answered. "In some ways, I'd say I'm looking for an honest man too. But that's difficult nowadays."

Will couldn't help but look at him with a slight interest for a moment because the man almost looked like a younger version of Hannibal. The trim three-piece suit and tie, the short, side-parted hair with the bangs, the stance—back straight and chin high. He had that familiar confident, sophisticated aura about him that Will knew well. Hell, even his accent sounded like Hannibal. He could easily pass off as his younger brother and Will wouldn't even doubt it.

"In actuality," Will said. "Diogenes said he was looking for a human being. An exemplar, or an idea of humanity, or both. But all he found were hypocrites and frauds."

“He wouldn’t be wrong,” the stranger replied. “Considering the world we live in, I’m quite the cynic as he was.”

“With everything that’s going on, anyone would be.”

The stranger glanced at him with the same smile as before. It almost seemed like the first time he had met Hannibal, when the doctor had looked at him the same way, with some interest that Will couldn't fathom. Even now, he couldn't quite understand what Hannibal saw in him.

“They would, wouldn’t they?” the stranger said. “What about you, Mr—”

“Adam Preston.” Will should’ve been used to the fake name by now, yet it still felt kinda odd.

“Preston. Huh... I don’t suppose you’re familiar with Dr. Lucius Preston?”

It took Will a little by surprise. Then again, Hannibal had been making some friends over the month, so this might be one of them.

“He’s my husband.”

The stranger's eyebrows rose with intrigue. “Is he? Small world. Tell me, would you consider yourself a cynic?”

“Not really. A realist, maybe.”

“Fair enough.” The man took a hand out of his pocket and reached out. “Arthur Sinclair.”

His demeanor was polite, with the way he spoke and presented himself. Yet, he seemed like an enigma. Something Will couldn’t decipher. He had always been one to trust his instincts, no matter how crazy they may be. And something told him to be cautious, even if he was intrigued.

He shook Arthur's hand. “How do you know my husband?”

“Through mutual friends,” the stranger replied. “He talked about you a couple of times. I couldn’t help but overhear you speaking with the other tourists. I can sense your enthusiasm for art.”

More like nostalgia. “It connects with me, I suppose.”

“You don’t come across as an art curator to me. Forgive me if I’m being blunt. It’s just... I feel like you belong in another profession.”

Yeah, like a profiler. “I get that often. I think it’s the looks.”

“Could be. You are good-looking.”

Will pushed his glasses up. “Thanks.”

Arthur slipped his hand in his pocket again and looked at the painting. “May I ask a hypothetical question?”

“Sure.”

“Do you think it’s fair for the greedy, evil people of this world to be culled? I mean, if someone came along and eliminated them, would you think he did the right thing?”

“Someone... like a serial killer?”

Will had no idea why he said that. Maybe because he was ‘married’ to a serial killer who liked to say, ‘Whenever feasible, one must always eat the rude’. Either way, he was slightly concerned his question might have come off as creepy.

“Maybe,” Arthur replied, unfazed, gaze still fixed on the painting.

Will raised his brows at him. “We all have a degree of darkness in us. I’m not in any place to judge.”

In his case, the darkness was overpowering.

“I think you are.” Arthur met his gaze. “Don’t you think the world would be far better without the people who cause pain and suffering?”

The empath in Will sensed something about Arthur he couldn’t quite place his finger on. Eyes often reflected a person’s emotions, yet this man’s eyes were inscrutable. It was like the first time he met Hannibal. He didn’t pick up anything from him at first, until he found out all his secrets.

“I suppose,” he replied, uncertain of what to say. “Hypothetically, I’d say it would be an improvement.”

Arthur gave a nod of approval. “I agree.” He turned to face Will. “I’m all about first impressions, and I observe the vibes I receive from people. You are different. I don’t really know how, but you... stand out from the rest.”

Will mentally sighed. *Great, another one to tell me that.*

“I believe I’m a good judge of character,” Arthur added.

It felt like he was flirting, from the eye contact he made to Will, and the compliments he gave. It felt like déjà vu somehow.

Or maybe, Will was simply self-absorbed.

Someone approached. Will turned to see Hannibal making his way towards them. It was a pleasant surprise. Will couldn’t tell how long he’d been standing there, or if he had just arrived. And it wasn’t very often that Hannibal skipped his usual formal clothing for a black leather jacket outfit. Will liked it a hell lot because Hannibal looked hot in that jacket. And when he gave him those come-hither looks, it only turned him on.

Hannibal side-eyed Arthur before sliding an arm around Will's waist and kissing his cheek.

"Apologies for my tardiness, darling," he said, smiling, then looked at Arthur. "Mr. Sinclair. I see you've met my husband."

"Apparently so," Arthur replied. "I would be lying if I said I wasn't a little envious of you. Adam is certainly a fine gentleman."

"I don't doubt it," Hannibal said.

He and Arthur stared at each other, as if they were having a showdown, ready to draw out their revolvers. Will frowned, detecting the hint of hostility in Hannibal's tone, masked by a feigned politeness. He wondered if the man had overheard their conversation before coming to them. It felt weird, like the two men were speaking a language he didn't understand. He deliberately cleared his throat, breaking the awkward silence.

"If you'll excuse me," Arthur said. "I have somewhere to be." He let his hand out to Will again. "It's been a pleasure, Mr. Preston. Hopefully, our paths cross again."

Will shook his hand. "The pleasure is mine, Mr. Sinclair."

Arthur and Hannibal gave each other the same brand of smirk before the former left.

"I must be missing something," Will said, looking at his husband. "Arthur tells me he's met you a couple of times."

Hannibal sniggered. "A couple of times would be an understatement. He is one of my patients."

That revelation took Will by surprise. He never imagined Arthur to be a patient, considering the refined aura he exuded. Then again, one would never know a person completely in a first meeting, and he did sense something strange in him back there.

"Small world," he echoed the man's words. "Is that why you're here? Hoping you'd bump into him?"

"I came here to see you," Hannibal replied. "I didn't expect to encounter him. When I saw him talking to you, I couldn't help but eavesdrop. Knowing him, I didn't want him anywhere too close to you."

So I was right. Will raised an eyebrow and smirked. "You were jealous."

"I was watchful. Arthur possessed an impertinent personality during our sessions. He often has a disparaging opinion on people. I sensed an animosity in him, a darkness he hid behind a veil of narcissism. He didn't seem very open to my therapy. Needless to say, his behavior tested my patience."

"Hmm. Almost sounds like someone I know."

Hannibal gave him a look.

“I do like it when you’re envious,” Will said. “Not wanting to share me with anyone. My shift ends in an hour. We can grab lunch after.”

“I’ll wait,” Hannibal replied. “I’d rather you stay away from that man. Something tells me he’s dangerous.”

The two of them stared at each other. If it weren’t for the tourists, Will would’ve kissed him passionately.

“Whatever you say,” he said.

Will headed to another group of tourists coming in. He liked being this... treasure of sorts that Hannibal refused to let anyone else touch. His husband being jealous was flattering. It explained that awkward staring contest. Hannibal might’ve been warning Arthur simply by his gaze. His amber eyes did have the ability to speak volumes.

Will sometimes found it hard to believe how far the two of them had come. There was a time when he had hated Hannibal, and knew him as the Ripper. He used to imagine him as the Stag, seeing him everywhere in places where a dead body was found. Even now, he saw some semblance of him in other people, like Arthur. It was proof of how deep his connection was with him.

It was also proof of how their relationship had evolved. From outright hating him, Will now loved him. He occasionally wondered if things would’ve been different had they met a lot earlier. If he would’ve felt differently about him.

Knowing Will, probably not.

Thinking of how Hannibal preferred to ‘eat the rude’, Will wouldn’t be surprised if his next target was Arthur. Hannibal really looked like he was about to stab the guy back there. Maybe follow him home and kill him discreetly like he always did.

Then eat him, of course.

Back home, Will washed and cleaned the plates after he and Hannibal finished their lunch.

“The food was delicious as always,” he said. “My compliments to the chef.”

Hannibal bowed his head in response. “Will you be going back to the gallery?”

“No. I think one of my colleagues can take over.” Will cleaned the last plate and placed it in the rack. He dried his hands with a hand towel. “I want to spend some time at home.”

He went into the living room where his dogs were curled up in their beds, sound asleep. Picking up a remote from the sofa, he switched on the TV to the news channel, where the latest murder of ‘*The Monster of Zurich*’ was being shown.

Apparently, the Monster had murdered two wealthy businessmen who happened to be brothers—namely John and Derek—and were known to dislike each other. They were rivals in their respective businesses. The corpses of the two men were found near a lake, their bodies artfully posed to look like one brother trying to kill the other with what looked like a knife glued to his hand. Deep slashes marked their stomachs from which blood had spewed, and stained the ground red. Their eyes were wide open in a rigid stare at each other.

Will tilted his head, observing the arrangement, reconstructing the scene in his mind. The whole thing resembled a painting he was familiar with. Hannibal sure didn't lose his flair for presentations.

"It looks like Cain and Abel," he said.

"John was jealous of Derek because of his influence, and the fact his business was growing a lot more," Hannibal said, standing beside him.

"So you gave them a historical end."

"I thought it was quite fitting, don't you?"

"I suppose. This is your fifth murder this month. You're building quite the reputation."

"I am."

"You're not the only serial killer though. There have been murders happening in the woods, but everyone's more interested in you."

As Will stared at the gruesome imagery on screen, Hannibal stared at him.

"Are you imagining how I did it?" he asked. "Like you always do?"

"Force of habit," Will replied. "I do miss the job."

Hannibal's voice lowered. "Are you still considering going back to Baltimore?"

Graham fell into contemplative silence for a moment. It was something he struggled to figure out. "It's the only thing that's been going on in my head. I can't reach a conclusion. Something's holding me back."

"You mean someone."

"It's hard to decide when you keep making me second-guess every damn thing I do."

There was a pause.

"You're right," Hannibal said. "I can't stop you. Only warn you of the consequences. It'll never be the same, and there's no guarantee you'll be free."

His expression was stoic, yet Will caught a glint of disappointment in his eyes before he walked away. Hannibal would never express it, but the whole subject of Will going back

clearly upset him.

Will sighed heavily. He wasn't used to this strange, posh life, and he wondered if he would ever be. He didn't feel at home. He felt more like a tourist, like he was on extended leave for an indefinite period of time. And Hannibal's disappointment wasn't making his predicament any easier. It only guilt-tripped him. Made him feel as though he was going to abandon him, which wasn't the case.

He wanted his old life back, and he also wanted a life with Hannibal. Two things in direct conflict with each other.

He didn't know what to do.

Chapter 3

Nothing infuriated Jack Crawford more than having Hannibal slip out of his hands again. And not only that, that psycho took Will. Jack was convinced Hannibal would kill him, eat him even, and it worried him. Hell, that guy had once tried to literally saw through Will's head. There was no telling what Hannibal could be up to. In spite of everything, Jack cared about Will and was hell bent on bringing him back, and killing Hannibal, of course. That man-eating bastard had eluded him far too many times.

Crawford's anger and resolve gave the impression of obsession to his senior officers. They figured he was getting too personal with the case without having found any solid leads. The leads he did find were mostly dead ends.

Still, Jack kept on it. Much to the vexation of his superiors, who wanted progress in the case. He found out about the murder that took place three hours away from Baltimore, and from the style of killing, he knew well it was Hannibal. His superiors were hell-bent on finding the murderer too. The murder led the FBI to the cabin in the woods where Jack found blood-stained bandages in the trash can in the bathroom. Then it further led him to discover the bodies of two cops in the woods.

He knew in his gut he was on the right track, and he intended to see this through, no matter what it took.

Zurich cops and Crime Scene Analysts surrounded the bodies of John and Derek. The grisly crime scene was cordoned off and nobody was allowed near the lake.

A detective in his early thirties was kneeling beside the bodies, cocking his head to the side as he examined the gaping slashes on the victims' stomachs, parts of their entrails hanging out. What fascinated him was the artful presentation of the corpses. The past four murders that had taken place in the span of three weeks all had a certain... aesthetic to them, like the murderer took his time in presenting them. The more murders took place, the more the detective itched to find the killer.

"Anything?" Came a voice behind him.

The detective looked up at the officer standing near him.

"Nothing I can see," he replied. "No trace, no evidence. Some of their organs have been removed. The MO is the same, yet I don't have a starting point. Whoever the killer is, he does have an artistic flair." He rose, taking another look at the bodies.

"I'm sure you'll find something, Fischer," said the officer.

"If I'm not mistaken, this reminds me of something..."

“What?” the officer asked.

“It kind of...” Fischer walked around the victims. “Looks like a representation of a painting I’d seen before.”

The other officer tilted his head to the side, trying to see what Fischer saw, and failed.

Fischer took off his beanie and ruffled his dark brown hair before putting it back on. “I know I’m going to find whoever did this. No matter how good the serial killer is, he’s bound to make a mistake. When that happens...” He glanced at his fellow officer. “I’ll be there.”

"I hope so," said the other cop. "'Cause otherwise you'll be reassigned to the woods murders case, you know that."

"This is bigger than what's going on in the woods. Besides, there are other cops investigating those. I intend to see this through to the end."

As evening fell, Will insisted on joining Hannibal on his hunt. Hannibal seemed detached, and Will knew why. It made him uncomfortable, and he intended on sorting it out once they got home. Hunting had been a one-man thing up until now. Now that Will came along, he intended to participate in it. Teamwork. Just like how they took down Dolarhyde. If Hannibal wasn’t dangerous on his own already, the two of them would be a force to be reckoned with.

Will wasn’t the least bit surprised to know Hannibal’s next target was none other than Arthur Sinclair.

“I’m guessing he really got on all your nerves for you to be going after him,” he said.

“Therapy has proven to be futile,” Hannibal replied. “Perhaps he could use a life lesson—never be rude.”

“I sensed something in him back at the gallery. Something dark. Unsettling.”

“Your instincts would be right. He murdered three people in the past couple of weeks. Three wealthy individuals.”

Will realized at that moment when Arthur spoke about someone taking the initiative of eliminating the evil people of this world, he was referring to himself.

He wanted to kill the greedy.

“You have to be kidding me,” Will muttered.

“I already saw the killer instinct in him the moment he stepped into my office,” Hannibal said. “His discipline and behavior mirrored mine, and at first, I found it intriguing until his condescendence stepped in.”

“Nobody can be you even if they tried.”

“Nobody has the power.”

The two of them sat in their car, in a quiet, lonely street, waiting for Arthur. Apparently, Hannibal had already learned his schedule—his comings and goings, every single thing he did in a day—and knew exactly when he would head home, which was seven PM. He usually walked along this street to reach his house. Hannibal intended to seize the opportunity while there were no witnesses around. He’d made that mistake once, when he had killed a man for Will.

Right on time, they saw Arthur across the street in the distance, walking in their direction.

“I hope you’re prepared,” Hannibal said.

“I wouldn’t be here if I wasn’t,” Will replied.

“Don’t use your sidearm until necessary. The last thing we need is to make a sound.”

They waited for Arthur to pass by before stepping out of their vehicles. Hannibal took out a serrated knife. They crossed the street and headed right into an alley in front of them. They backed up against the wall. Hannibal slowly peered out to see Arthur standing in his spot and looking around, as if suspicious. He withdrew slowly. Waiting.

Waiting.

He peered out again and Arthur had resumed walking. He slipped out, knife in hand, walking with hurried yet stealthy steps towards his target. Will kept his head low as he followed. They closed the gap between them and Arthur.

What they did not expect was how sharp Arthur’s senses would turn out to be.

As Hannibal was about to grab him, Arthur spun around. He caught hold of Hannibal’s knife arm and wrenched his wrist, forcing him to drop it. Will darted behind Arthur, coiling an arm around his neck and yanking him away. Arthur wriggled and twisted, enough to elbow him in the face. Having recovered quickly, Hannibal picked up the knife and lunged at Arthur, who shot a kick to his gut.

Will’s head snapped back when Arthur rammed his elbow into his face again. He let go of Arthur. The second Arthur spun around to him, Will landed a massive punch to his face, then a few to his ribs. At the fifth punch, Arthur stopped Will’s arm, shooting him a surprised glance, as if he didn’t see this coming. With a sudden show of brute strength, he flipped Will over his shoulder and slammed him to the ground. It was like seeing another version of Dolarhyde.

Hannibal was already on his feet again, and just like with Dolarhyde, he slashed the back of Arthur’s calf with the knife. Sinclair yelped and fell to one knee. Hannibal pounced on him, pinning him to the ground. He was about to stab him in the chest but Arthur punched him across his face before grabbing his knife hand and using it to stab him in the gut. Hannibal grunted, stopping the blade from going further into him.

Arthur brought him to the ground, trying to snatch the knife from him. Will lay on the ground nearby, groaning softly as he took out the sidearm from his waistband. The click when he thumbed back the hammer alerted Arthur, who glanced at him and immediately kicked the gun right out of his hand. Then kicked him in the face.

A sharp shaft of pain coursed through Will's nose. He barely got the chance to recover from the attack when Arthur came for him. He received another punch to the cheekbone before Arthur grabbed the fallen gun and yanked him to his feet. Hannibal pulled the knife out of the side of his stomach—which hadn't cut him too deep—and scrambled to his feet. Arthur spun Will around, locking an arm around his neck and pressing the gun to his temple with his other hand.

"Ah, ah, ah," he said to Hannibal. "Stop right there, unless you want your husband's brains blown out."

Will grasped at Arthur's arm, gritting his teeth as he tried to pry it away but Arthur had a hell of a sturdy grip.

"Why am I not surprised that you came after me, Dr. Preston?" Arthur said. "I always suspected there was more to you. Something dark. I noticed your animosity towards me in our sessions. Whenever I spoke of having urges to kill, you encouraged me to follow them. Something about you, doctor, didn't sit quite right." He gave a creepy grin. "I should've known you were a murderer too."

Hannibal gripped his knife tighter. Will knew there was no way Arthur was getting out of this alive now, after what he said. You don't challenge the cannibal and get away with it.

Arthur looked at Will, leaning in so close his nose brushed against his cheek. Will pressed his lips together, trying to lean his head away.

"What I didn't expect was you, Adam," Sinclair spoke in his ear. "You didn't strike me as a killer or anything. It's such a shame things turned out this way. I really liked you."

Hannibal's jaw twitched seeing him that close to Will. Will struggled to free himself.

"I can see why you like him," Arthur said. "Unfortunately for you, you're gonna have to watch him die before your eyes."

"You won't survive if you pull that trigger," Hannibal said, his deep, heavy voice threatening.

"Kill him," Will said. "Don't worry about me."

"Listen to him, Doctor," Arthur taunted.

In the midst of the rage, was a glimmer of worry in Hannibal's eyes. Will had seen that look before, back at the cliff house, when Hannibal was trying to save him. This was bound to happen, sooner or later, and all Will wanted was for him to carry on living no matter what. If it meant he had to give up his life, then so be it. It was a miracle he even came this far in the first place. He probably should've died a long time ago.

“I would ask for last words, but I don’t want to give you the luxury,” Arthur said. “Say goodbye, Mr. Preston.”

“Don’t,” Hannibal warned.

Arthur pulled the trigger.

Chapter 4

The gun clicked.

Probably jammed.

Arthur frowned at the sidearm. Will seized the opportunity and grabbed hold of the gun, yanking it down, along with Arthur's arm, then elbowing him in the face the same way he did.

Hannibal had been itching for a brief window of opportunity. He found it when Will broke free of Arthur's grip and rushed to the side, giving Hannibal a wide target. With full force, he flung his knife at Arthur. The blade windmilled in the air, catching the orange glint of the street light before finding its home in Arthur's chest.

The blade lodged itself to the hilt inside his chest. The man gaped before collapsing.

Will coughed, backing away from him. Picking up the gun, he checked the magazine to find it empty. Hannibal strode over to the dead body, pissed as hell, and pulled the knife from his chest. He slit Arthur's throat slowly, jaw clenching as blood spewed from the gash. He didn't need to do that. *He wanted to*. Arthur crossed the line when he dared to hurt Will like that.

"You gave me an empty gun?" Will said.

Hannibal stood, blood spattered on his face. "Told you, I didn't want us to make a sound. Besides, I thought the gun would be a liability more than anything. Turns out I was right."

"He could've killed me."

"I would never let that happen."

Will's gaze dropped to Hannibal's wound. Despite feeling a little pissed that his husband lied to him again, Hannibal's wellbeing was his priority. "You're hurt badly."

"A shallow cut at the side of my stomach," Hannibal replied. "The blade didn't go through me. I'll be fine."

"Of course you'll be. You survived a gunshot before. But I'm not sure I'd handle it if something bad happened to you."

Neither could Hannibal. The sudden swell of anger he felt when Arthur got too close to Will could intimidate anyone. It was far beyond his comprehension too. The lengths he would go for Will. The limits he would cross. He'd never cared about anyone to such an extent before and probably never would. Will was the first and last exception. Hannibal wished he had the opportunity to torture Arthur without clemency for what he did before killing him. Maybe the only way to punish him now was to eat him.

A small part of Hannibal's bitterness was caused by Will's predicament, of him wanting to go back to Maryland. He couldn't tell the difference between his emotions while fighting Arthur. It made him realize just how much power Will had over him, how big of an impact he could cause.

The man was his passion as well as his destruction.

"Something's obviously troubling you," Will said, bandaging Hannibal's wound.

"What gave you that idea?" Hannibal asked.

"I can see it on your face."

Hannibal buttoned up his white shirt and stood, walking into the kitchen. "Nothing troubles me."

"Sure."

Will had watched him hack Arthur into pieces in that alley before extracting the body parts and organs he wanted. It was the first time he saw him do it first-hand. The thing he did best. Having left his body there in the cold, dark path, they came home.

After keeping some meat aside for dinner, Hannibal neatly wrapped up the remaining chunks in clear plastic and stored them in the freezer. He did everything with precision and neatness, all with the finesse of a professional five-star chef. Will sighed, walking over to him.

"If I didn't know any better, I'd say you're avoiding me," he said.

"There isn't much for me to say when you've made up your mind about leaving," Hannibal replied.

"I haven't made up my mind about anything."

"It doesn't matter. Deep down, you're weighing the options and the balance is tipping in favor of one. We both know what that is."

"Doesn't mean it's concrete. It still confuses me."

"What is it you really want?"

Will drew closer, and wrapped his arms around Hannibal in a warm embrace. Hannibal closed his eyes, feeling Will's lips on his cheek. His slow exhale calmed the thunderstorm inside him. Hannibal held his waist, leaning his head against his. Will was his kryptonite. No matter how much he wanted to believe otherwise, it was the truth.

Parting from the hug after a while, Will muttered, "The only thing that holds me back is you. Because the truth is, I want to be with you, and that want is stronger than any doubt."

He noticed Hannibal's face easing a little, out of relief.

"There's a modicum of doubt, though," Hannibal asked. "Unless you've made a decision, it'll always be there."

"I don't want to think about that right now. Maybe we should both stop thinking about it and go up to the bedroom."

Will caught the beginning of a smile on Hannibal's face as he walked towards the stairs.

Hannibal followed.

...



It was disarming when Hannibal stood so close to Will. The soft glow of the night lamps in the bedroom highlighted his cheekbones.

"I still have to prepare dinner," he said.

"We have time," Will replied. "You have to admit, no matter where I go, you'd be there."

"Baltimore is the only place I can't go."

"You'd find a way if you really wanted to." Will stroked his cheek. "We're like two sides of the same coin. Yin and yang. Can't exist without the other." His voice reduced to a near

whisper. "Right now, I want you to take me." He kissed the corners of his husband's mouth. *"I want you, Hannibal."*

In a second, Hannibal's lips were on his, coaxing his mouth open so he could slide his tongue in. Hannibal grabbed his waist with one arm and tugged him close, pressing his body firmly to his. That dizzying euphoria Will always felt whenever he kissed or touched him surged inside him, coupled with an insatiable craving. The same craving that reflected in the way Hannibal dropped kisses down his neck and sucked it. Will gasped and dropped his head back, clinging onto him. He quivered a little when Hannibal's cold hands slipped inside his grey sweater and fondled his skin.

Hannibal kissed his throat before pushing his sweater up and over his head. Once it was on the floor, he gripped his body and kissed his chest with such fervor that Will could barely hold himself up. Hannibal's lips burned upon his skin, his tongue leaving wet imprints all over. He tugged at the buttons of Hannibal's shirt, and the other undid them. Will pressed desperate kisses along his cheek, while running his hands across his hard chest.

When he gave in to his feelings, so did Hannibal. It was all it took to unlock his desires, his devotion and passion. Will knew it was all he wanted, all he ever asked for. And after all this time, he still couldn't wrap his head around how the man obsessed over him so much.

With their clothes on the floor, they lay on the bed, on their sides, with Will's back pressed firmly against his Hannibal's chest, his body perfectly spooning into his. Hannibal wrapped an arm around him, hugging him close as he kissed his shoulder. Will lost track of time, of his own mind, closing his eyes and losing himself in the fervent caresses of Hannibal's lips. In between those kisses, he felt his hard cock plunge inside his ass, stretching him wide open and penetrating deep. A moan slipped from his mouth as he grabbed the sheets, crumpling them in his fist. Their bodies moved like a wave, following a silent rhythm.

Hannibal clasped Will's hips, tugging them back with every hard thrust. He exhaled when Will clenched around him.

A feverish heat flooded Will's veins, rushing down to his cock. It lay hard and swollen. He reached back to grip Hannibal's hips, while thrusting his own backwards, trying to take all of him. Hannibal reached forward and wrapped his fingers firmly around Will's cock.

Will gasped and turned his head to him. "Harder."

They kissed. Their mouths didn't quite align but it didn't matter. Even the sloppy kiss, the soft smacks of their lips in between was passionate enough for them. Will loved these moments when the two of them split themselves open to each other, like threads of a fabric unraveling. Bodies fusing into each other until it was unclear where one ended and the other began.

Hannibal picked up the pace, kissing the corners of Will's gaping mouth. Will felt his breath gusting over him and he breathed him in. He caught a glimpse of Hannibal's heavy-lidded eyes focused on him. With his arousal reaching a peak, he felt like he would explode. This intimacy could overpower him and he was willing to be destroyed by it, to be reduced to ashes. Their impassioned love could set the world on fire.

Will cried out, exhaling loudly and shuddering as he came hard, spilling over the sheets. But Hannibal wasn't done yet. The man might've been holding back deliberately to make this last longer.

Hannibal rolled him onto his back before settling on top of him. He trailed kisses down Will's chest, to his stomach, then along the length of his wet, glistening cock. He swiped his tongue over the slickness, tasting him, then moving further down to Will's balls and sucking on the hard flesh.

Will arched his back, sighing, "Hannibal."

At this rate, he might come again just from that.

Hannibal dragged his tongue up his body in one long lick.

Will brought him up to face level, holding his cheek. "I love you," he breathed.

Nothing had quite the impact like those words did. Hannibal gazed at him, eyes almost misting over, before kissing him in response.

He thrust into Will again, rocking him steadily on the bed. His cock delved through Will's slick, tender muscles, bringing that ache all over again. Will kept his eyes on him, unable to look away. He hadn't been able to look away ever since he fell in love with him.

Hannibal took one of his hands and pressed it to his heart, like he wanted him to feel the mad thumping within.

Like he wanted to say, *'It's yours. It always has been.'*

Will sometimes overlooked the fact that Hannibal had given up his heart to him on a silver platter, a long time ago. Long before Will came to terms with his feelings. And it wasn't just his heart. *Everything* of Hannibal belonged to him. Nobody, not a damn soul in the entire universe could ever have that privilege. In return, Will had given his everything to him.

He raised his head to kiss Hannibal's chest, then trailed his nose up his neck to his face, taking in his scent, till their lips finally met. His head fell back to the pillow as they kissed fiercely. Hannibal plunged harder into him, their hips smacking against each other. Will felt the pressure building up inside him all over again, making his back arch.

"Ah, Hannibal," he moaned softly, digging his fingers in Hannibal's shoulder blades. "Come inside me."

Hannibal buried his face in the other's neck, clasping his body firmly as he climaxed. Will felt his thick spurt filling him up, and he came hard again, over his stomach. Hannibal thrust inside him until he had emptied himself.

Hannibal's grip loosened and his body fell limp. Will gently caressed his back.

Taking some time to get his senses together, Hannibal pulled out of him. Will's body tried to adjust to the strange emptiness after having been filled too full.

Hannibal kissed Will's reddened lips. The strands of his silvery bangs lightly stroked Will's face. Then moving off him, he lay next to him. The two of them turned to their sides to face each other, hold and caress each other.

"I remember a time like this," Hannibal said, breathy. "When we hid out in that cabin. It was the first time we had spoken the whole truth to each other."

"It's hard to forget," Will replied. "Especially since it was the first time I had confessed my feelings to you."

"To be honest, there is something I've wanted to tell you for some time. It might sound fairly obvious when I say it. Maybe even banal."

"The truth is never banal, you told me that. Nothing that's said between us is ever taken for granted."

Hannibal paused.

"I suppose our recent conversations did bother me. I had imagined our life together and I don't want it to be cut short. I don't want you to go back, Will. Selfishly, I want you here by my side forever."

Will never knew how much he needed to hear those words.

"Regardless of what I feel and what I think," he replied. "I'm incapable of leaving you. You and I are bound in unbreakable ways. I'm not going anywhere. Maybe that decision might be complicated for me to deal with but I will deal with it if I should. I can't stay away from you even if I wanted to." He half-grinned. "Let's face it. You'd get yourself arrested again just so you can stay in my sights."

For the first time in a long time, Hannibal laughed. Even if it was brief, even if it was just a silent huff under his breath, a mere chuckle, it still showed the side of him that only revealed itself around Will. And Will alone.

"Perhaps," he said.

Bound in each other's arms, with their legs interlocked, they didn't stop kissing for quite some time. Hannibal hugged Will firmly, like he never wanted to let him go, and every kiss he planted on those soft, tender lips were declarations of love.

"Time for dinner?" Will said in between.

"Of course," Hannibal replied.

Jack couldn't tell if his lack of motivation was because he failed to find new leads on Hannibal or because his superiors thought he never would find one. They sure had a talent of raining on his parade. He was on his own and they weren't making it any easier.

Something might come up. Something should. No matter how skilled a serial killer, he would always slip-up at one point or another.

But he could sure use some kind of a clue.

He stood outside his office, staring at the international news on the TV. He had tried that too—putting Hannibal's face on the news in an attempt to lure him out. However, that amounted to nothing and he and Will ended up slipping away. So much for that.

The more Jack thought about Will and all the things that man had said to him regarding Hannibal, the more he realized that Will's intentions were in favor of him. Will had once told him he wanted to run away with Hannibal. Maybe that was what happened. Maybe Hannibal didn't capture him as Jack initially suspected. It seemed to oddly make sense. Still, Crawford wanted to find them both.

How, though? It's not like they'll show up on the news.

No. But the murders might.

Jack frowned at the news report on the TV which spoke about multiple gruesome murders that have happened in Zürich, which had caused panic amongst people. The said murders had police baffled, and they were still on the hunt for who they called '*The Monster of Zürich*'.

Unease crept into the pit of Jack's stomach. He went back into his office, to his computer, and looked up the internet for more news about the Zürich murders. He found recent articles on the subject which were accompanied by disturbing visuals of the bodies.

Nobody except Jack would see the pattern in the murders for what they were. The similarities in the style of killing were too striking to be ignored.

Jack's face hardened with a spark of determination.

After the sheer frustration of hitting dead ends, finally...

He had him now.

Chapter 5

“We’ve been invited to a fundraiser,” Hannibal said. “Courtesy of Lance McKinnon.”

“He sounds familiar,” Will replied.

“He should. He’s the one who helped us with all the formalities after we came here. Our documents and such.”

“Right. Must’ve slipped from my mind. We shouldn’t miss it, then. After all, we owe him one.”

“Of course. There’s lunch too.”

“Pity it won’t be up to your expectations of a meal.”

“I can make up for it with dinner.”

“Feels weird seeing Arthur’s body parts in the freezer.”

“He won’t be there for long.”

“Then perhaps we should get going if we want to get there on time.”

Will stripped down to his boxers. Initially, he’d be aware of Hannibal’s adoring gaze on him, watching him take his clothes off. He was aware of it even now, and he had started liking it all the more. Something about the way Hannibal looked at him, as if he were a stunning sculpture, made him feel amazing.

He turned to see Hannibal staring at his ass, before the man’s eyes flitted up to meet Will’s gaze.

“The view might get old real fast if you keep staring at me all the time,” Will said.

“The view gets better each time I stare at you,” Hannibal said, a slight smile pushing up those thin lips. “It is anything but mundane.”

Will smiled wider, and opened the large wardrobe to take out a black suit and matching trousers, and a white shirt.

“May I ask you something?” Hannibal said.

“Go ahead,” Will replied, putting on the shirt.

“Do you remember the time you saw me in prison? You wanted my help with The Tooth Fairy. Or rather, the Dragon.”

“How can I forget?”

“Do you remember what you said to me when you thought the Dragon was dead?”

Will’s smile reduced a bit as he put on the trousers next. “Not a memory I’d like to relive.”

“Humor me.”

There was a sigh. “You asked me if it was good to see you and I said no.”

“The reality of that moment intrigues me because I think you were lying. Though it was a convincing lie.”

“What makes you say that?”

Hannibal approached. “If it was the truth, you can look at me without hesitation and say so. The eyes never lie.”

That was the problem. Will couldn’t look at him. Those amber eyes peered into his soul and saw the things he never spoke, the things he had struggled to. He sought Hannibal’s help at the prison under the pretense of catching Dolarhyde, but both of them knew that wasn’t the whole truth. Hannibal felt it even when Will denied it.

Will looked at him. “I missed seeing you.”

There it is. The simple truth gave Hannibal a satisfaction like no other. He slowly buttoned up the top three buttons of Will’s shirt which he had left open.

“So it *was* good to see me,” he said.

“Yes,” Will replied. “No matter how far I stray, all roads lead back to you.”

Hannibal stroked Will’s cheekbone with his thumb, his fingers below his ear.

“I’m glad they do,” he said.

His thin lips met Will’s, fitting into them like puzzle pieces. Softly, tenderly.

“We’ll be late,” Will whispered.

“I suppose we can make up for this after dinner,” Hannibal said.

“Sounds like a plan.”

Detective Fischer’s face scrunched when he saw the butchered remains of Arthur Sinclair, left to rot in an alley. He masked his nose and mouth with his handkerchief as he examined the corpse, though there wasn’t much left to examine when most of it was carved out, and the organs missing.

Still, even in its brutality, it looked like a twisted work of art.

“Jesus,” came the voice of his fellow detective behind him. “These murders get more and more colorful each day.”

Fischer rose to his feet and turned to him. “And yet, our killer still has time for presentations. Quite the meticulous character.”

“Please tell me you found something, Elias,” the other detective said. “We’ve been running around in circles. This guy is good at covering his tracks. The victims have nothing in common, and the locations are random too. He’s not following any pattern apart from his MO. It’s frying my brain.”

“Mine too. His motives are unclear.” Elias narrowed his eyes and frowned, pondering. “Or... maybe... this could just be a wild guess but the victims do have one thing in common, as far as we know.”

“And what’s that?”

“They’ve all committed a crime or made some kind of stupid mistake. Big or small, it doesn’t matter. And they were all obnoxious personalities. Take those two brothers who were murdered recently—John and Derek, for example. I mean they were rich assholes. People hated them. They didn’t exactly commit any crime per se, but their business wasn’t exactly... ethical, so to speak.”

“So, what? Our killer’s a good Samaritan?”

“I wouldn’t say that. To me, he’s still nothing but a scumbag that I need to hunt down. And if I am forced to put a bullet in his head, I won’t hesitate.”

Elias walked to the sidewalk, glancing at it and around the street. Hoping to find a sliver of a clue. Something, anything. But the entire area was seemingly ‘clean’. The body itself didn’t have any traces of someone else’s DNA on it.

“Elias,” his partner called. “I got the details of Arthur’s activities for the past week. He’s been having regular appointments with his psychiatrist, Dr... Lucius Preston. In fact, his last appointment was on the day before the murder.”

“I see,” Elias replied. “Let’s pay Dr. Preston a visit. See what he has to say.”

Will and Hannibal entered an ostentatious banquet hall, with pale yellow accents on the false ceilings and bright lighting. There were tables with silk tablecloths and vases of roses placed at the center. Almost all the guests who were present, about thirty of them, were wealthy and influential.

“I can never get used to this.” Will looked around. “I hate crowds and socializing too much.”

“I can do the talking for you,” Hannibal said. “We’ll stay for lunch and then excuse ourselves under the pretense of urgent work.”

Will hummed and took out his glasses from his inner suit pocket and put them on. Hannibal smiled.

“They always suit you,” he said, then slid an arm around his waist. “Shall we?”

They went to Lance, who was conversing with some guests. The man’s gaze fell on them and he excused himself.

“I almost thought you two wouldn’t make it,” Lance said, approaching them.

“Wouldn’t want to miss the food,” Will said.

Lance let out a short laugh. “I know *Lucius* can be a little picky when it comes to food, so I made sure to bring in the best meat dishes. I hope it’ll be to your liking.”

“I’m sure it will,” Hannibal said.

“I don’t know,” Will replied, half-smiling at his husband. “He can be a fussy eater.”

Hannibal smirked.

“The fact you’re the only one who can say anything to him does make you special.” Lance winked at Hannibal. “I see why you like him. Come on, I’ll introduce you to the guests. Some people you have to meet.”

As Hannibal said, he did most of the talking, yet there were times when Will impressed the guests with his witty answers, which put a smug smile on Hannibal’s face. He couldn’t have been prouder.

Two men entered the hall, led by a third in a brown jacket, with neatly combed back hair and a five o’clock shadow. The first one to spot them was Hannibal, then Will. The man in the brown jacket looked directly at them as he approached them.

“Mr. Lucius Preston?” he asked.

“Yes,” Hannibal replied.

The man flashed a badge. “Detective Elias Fischer. I’d like to speak to you in private.”

A bit of unease churned in Hannibal’s stomach, but he knew not to let it show. He guessed what this could be about.

“Seriously?” Lance intervened. “I’m sorry but this is inappropriate timing.”

“It’s alright. It’ll only be a minute,” Hannibal said “After you, detective.”

Will joined him, but Elias stopped him.

“I only need to speak to him,” said the detective.

“I’m his husband, so if you want to question him, you’re going to have to include me,” Will replied.

Even Hannibal couldn’t stop him from being protective. Not that he wanted to. The two of them followed the officers to a quiet corner.

“We need to ask you a few questions regarding Arthur Sinclair,” Elias said. “You might know him, Dr. Preston, since he was one of your patients.”

“Was?” Hannibal said.

“Arthur was found murdered last night,” Elias replied.

Hannibal feigned sympathy. “How unfortunate. I find that hard to digest.”

“You were the last person he spoke to. Did he seem... apprehensive or... maybe behaving strangely?”

“Strange isn’t the word I’d use in my line of work. I’ve handled many unique patients so it’s hard to answer your question that way. However, I can say that Arthur had exhibited hostile behavior during our sessions.”

“What do you mean?”

“Normally I don’t discuss the details of my sessions due to doctor-patient confidentiality, but since this is concerned with a murder of one of my patients, I am inclined to help. Arthur often spoke about... killing the greedy and the powerful people of the world. He said he wanted to be the one to do it. When I tried to reason with him, he threatened me.”

Hannibal deliberately exaggerated Arthur’s behavior, partly because he didn’t like him, and also to divert the suspicion of murder towards him.

“Threatened how?” Elias asked.

“Well, he said he would kill me too,” Hannibal answered. “He didn’t seem receptive to therapy. Naturally, I thought I should refer him to another psychiatrist for my own safety. But... unfortunately, I can’t do that now.”

Elias glanced at Will with that hint of suspicion he did with Hannibal.

“I don’t suppose you’ve spoken to Arthur?” he asked.

“Once,” Will replied, calmly. “He showed up at the art gallery I work in, talking about the exact same things he did with Lucius. Killing the greedy.”

“It seems he might have done it already,” Hannibal added. “I’ve heard about the recent murders on the news. All the victims seem to be rich or influential in some way, with some degree of unethical behavior.”

“They did have some black spots,” Elias said. “But it’s not up to anyone to decide their fate. Everyone deserves a fair trial, even the worst of them. Nobody is above the law, and if they are, it’s my job to hunt them down. And believe me, I have an excellent track record.”

There was conviction in his voice, his eyes, and on his face. He didn’t hesitate and wasn’t intimidated by anyone. With his knowledge and experience, Hannibal could gauge a person’s ability, like how he did with Will. Something told him the detective was true to his word. He could pose a huge problem real soon.

“I don’t doubt it,” he said.

“Is there anything else you can tell me that can be of help?” Elias asked.

“Not that I can think of.” Hannibal glanced at Will. “Darling?”

“No,” Will replied.

“Alright,” said Elias, handing Lecter his card. “If you have any information, you can call this number. We’ll keep in touch.”

“Absolutely, detective,” Hannibal replied.

Elias took another look at the two men as he and his officers left. Will slid his hands in his pockets, his face hardening with a tinge of worry.

“He’s not buying it completely,” he said. “He suspects us.”

“He suspects me,” Hannibal replied. “Either way, we need to deal with this.”

“We’d have to plan first. Getting rid of him won’t be easy and we won’t be able to do it without attracting a lot of attention.” Will sighed and turned to face Hannibal. “Just make sure neither of us end up in prison again, or worse. We’ve endured a lot to be here.”

“I won’t let that happen. I promise.”

They went back to Lance, who had been looking their way with visible concern on his face.

“Everything alright?” he asked.

“Yes,” Hannibal replied. “We handled it.”

“You sure? ‘Cause I got contacts with the police, so if you’re in any trouble, I could make a few phone calls.”

Will and Hannibal exchanged glances, probably thinking the same thing—something like that might be helpful, though not at the moment.

“No, that’s alright,” Hannibal said. “I appreciate the gesture.”

“Okay,” Lance said. “Well, I suppose we enjoy the party. It’s almost time for lunch.”

The rest of the fundraiser didn't go with a peace of mind. Hannibal and Will masked their apprehension with smiles, passing furtive glances to each other in between. Because worst case scenario, the two of them feared only one thing.

Losing each other.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Elias wasn't sure what about Lucius Preston seemed off but he had a weird feeling. He decided to keep an eye on him, while digging deeper into Arthur Sinclair. The man was a serial killer until he met the same demise.

What goes around comes around.

A fellow officer approached him while he sat at his desk. "Hey. There's a cop who's come here all the way from Baltimore. Says he's got information on the killer we're looking for."

Elias frowned. "What?"

He glanced around and saw a man in a hat standing near a wall and staring at him.

"He's with the FBI," the fellow officer added. "Since you're in charge of the case, I figured you need to talk to him."

Elias stood from his desk and approached the man, letting a hand out.

"Detective Elias Fischer," he said.

"Jack Crawford, FBI," the man shook his hand.

"You're a long way from home, Mr. Crawford."

"I had no choice, since you and I are looking for the same person."

"My partner says you have information."

"I do. The man you're looking for is Hannibal Lecter. I'm guessing he's using some alias. Ever heard of the Chesapeake Ripper?"

"Can't say that I have."

"Well, he's killed too many to count. And we've been after him for a long time. We did capture him but he ended up fleeing the country, and hiding out here. His MO matches the one of the murders here."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because I know him like the back of my hand. It's definitely him. You might want to look into Hannibal Lecter. I'm sure you'll find all you need."

"You are the only one from the FBI who's come here."

“Let’s just say they have sort of given up on this but not me. I figured it was my job to inform you, detective, and to help you catch the killer.”

This was seemingly out of the blue, but if the man did have information then it would make Elias’ job a bit easier. At this point, he was grasping at straws. A solid lead would help.

Hannibal had made the right connections when he and Will moved to Zürich because he knew well they would come in handy if situations went south, and they did. Lance McKinnon didn’t just help them with their fake documents and identities, but he also had control over the police force. He knew exactly what was going on and when.

And so, during dinner, Hannibal’s phone buzzed. He put his fork down and answered the incoming call.

“You told me to keep a lookout for a certain individual, right?” Lance asked. “An FBI agent?”

“Yes,” Hannibal replied.

“I just got word he showed up at the precinct. He’s talking about the Chesapeake Ripper to one of the detectives.”

Hannibal drew in a deep breath, out of silent frustration. Jack sure was persistent, he had to give him that. Of course the only way the detectives would know about his true identity was through Jack, because Hannibal hadn’t left a single trace in any of his recent murders over the month. He knew without a doubt that the cops had nothing on him.

Jack was the key.

Hannibal wasn’t the least bit intimidated by the police since he’d been through worse before, but it sure as hell was getting on his nerves. Possibly ruined his dinner with his husband.

Across the table, Will sent a questioning glance to the phone.

“Understood,” Hannibal said.

“Do you want me to take necessary measures?” Lance asked.

“That would be great, Lance. Thank you. I owe you one.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

Hannibal kept the phone down.

“Looks like bad news,” Will said.

Hannibal swallowed the bit of meat in his mouth. “Jack’s here.”

Will exhaled sharply through his nose and glanced at the plate. "This was bound to happen. I told you."

"Lance is going to take measures. It won't be long before the cops find us, though."

"And kill you. You know that's what Jack wants. I'll be taken back to Baltimore. Imprisoned, possibly for the rest of my life."

"That's not going to happen."

"It might."

Neither of them knew what to say next. They knew this could very well be their last night together. Will finished his food and took his plate and cutlery to the kitchen. Hannibal cleaned up after himself, and gathered the plates and cutlery.

There was a woeful silence as they put their dishes into the dishwasher. Will turned to face Hannibal, but didn't speak for a moment.

"Are you alright?" Hannibal asked.

"I wouldn't make it out of this alive either," Will replied. "If you die, so do I."

Apprehension pricked at Hannibal's gut, as well as the urge to pull Will into his arms and keep him safe forever.

"No matter what happens," Will added. "I need to you to know that I love you for real."

Hannibal loved him beyond comprehension too, which was why he wasn't ready to lose him, lose the life they had together. He knew exactly what fate had in store for them and he refused to accept it. He refused to let the world he fought so hard to build for the two of them be destroyed. The dejected look on Will's face made it look like the worst was about to happen.

"Me too," he said.

"I'm going to freshen up," Will said, and went to the stairs.

Hannibal watched him go up, then went into the living room and to the wide drawer near the wall. He pulled open the third drawer and took out Will's gun. He checked the rounds in it, making sure it was loaded this time before putting it back.

He then went to the grand piano at the corner of the room and sat down to play it. He best expressed himself through music and art, and his silent pain, his apprehension and fear, reflected in the sombre music he played. A hauntingly beautiful rendition.

Will came downstairs after a while, dressed in a fresh t-shirt and boxers, and padded towards him.

"It's beautiful," he said.

“Thank you,” Hannibal replied.

Will straddled Hannibal’s lap, facing him, and held his face. Hannibal stared at the deep blue of his eyes, the mix of fear and pain in them. He caught the glint of a suppressed tear that fought to come out. And when Will’s lips met his, Hannibal felt the tear roll down to his lips.

It felt like a goodbye kiss.

Their lips parted afterwards, and Will tried to force a smile, which faltered. He tore his gaze away, unable to face his husband.

“I’m going to bed,” he said.

“Will.” Hannibal stopped him, catching his cheek. “I made you a promise and I intend to keep it. Nobody can take this away from us. Not if I can help it.”

Will closed his eyes and nuzzled his cheek in his palm. “It’s inevitable.”

“I disagree.”

Will dropped his head to the other's shoulder, exhaling a shaky breath. Hannibal hugged him.

“I was starting to like this place,” Will whispered. “I couldn’t have asked for anything better than staying here with you. I suppose it’s asking too much.”

“No, it isn’t. We still have time. I’m not going to lose you again, Will. I would destroy the city if I should, to keep you safe.”

Will hugged him tighter. The fear of loss fueled Hannibal’s determination to stop the worst from happening.

The cops were mistaken if they thought they could come in the way.

Will couldn’t sleep that night. He awoke in the early hours of dawn, when the clock struck four AM. He figured he’d go out for a walk but he couldn’t do that without waking Hannibal, who, as it turned out, wasn’t sleeping all that well either.

“Will,” Hannibal said, voice hoarse. "Are you alright?"

“I’m going out to get some air,” Will replied. “I want to enjoy my freedom while it lasts.”

"It won't be safe."

"I know."

Will got off the bed and put his jeans on, along with a warm jacket. He wrapped a scarf snug around his neck and went downstairs. He went to the wide drawer in the living room and pulled open the last one, taking his gun out. It was loaded, and he tucked it in the back of his

waistband. There was another sidearm he'd bought for Hannibal, who never used it since he hated guns. Yet, Will kept it there, anyway, in case it came in handy.

He put on his boots and walked out the door.

...

The biting wind blew past Will's face. His hands were in his pockets as he walked. The cold didn't bother him. Not as much as the uncertainty of the future did. He wanted to stay right here in Zürich with Hannibal for the rest of their lives.

He no longer had second thoughts, or desires to go back to Baltimore.

He wanted to be wherever Hannibal was.

As he walked along the quiet, lonely street, a man in a trench coat and a round hat a short distance away, walked towards him.

Will slowed his pace when the man got close enough for him to see his face.

"It's been a while, Will," said the man. "I thought it would take longer to find you."

Will stood at a safe distance from him. "You're a long way from home, Jack."

Jack half-smiled. "Funny. Someone else told me the same thing recently. I don't like being far away from home, but... desperate times. You haven't changed a bit. Aside from your hair, of course. It's grown a little."

"I like it that way."

Jack raised his head. "Too early for a walk."

"Sleep has never been on my side." Will took his hands out of his pockets, rubbing them together. He was mentally prepared to whip out his sidearm if necessary. "Pretty sure you haven't come here to check on me, so why don't you get straight to the part where you want to kill me and Hannibal?"

"Just Hannibal," Jack said. "I've come here to take you home."

Will sniggered. "Sure. We both know I'll be sent to prison again."

"You'll have a fighting chance. There's every possibility that you won't go to prison. You could get your life back. All you have to do is tell me where he is, and then come back home with me."

"And you thought that would work with me."

"I figured you would be smart. Everyone's after Hannibal, not you. You literally have a chance to walk out of this and go home. You know that. Deep down."

Jack was right. Will might get his old life back. Didn't mean he wanted it.

"You're persuasive." Will half-smiled. "What makes you think I would tell you where he is?"

"Because it's the right thing to do. Because he's the monster you always used to say he was."

"So am I."

Jack stared at him briefly before lowering his gaze and nodding, as if realizing the situation.

"You're with him now," he said. "There's no bigger mistake than that."

"Betraying him would be a bigger mistake," Will replied.

"What guarantee do you have he won't betray you?"

"If he did, he wouldn't have taken a month to do it. You won't get to him as long as I'm around."

Footsteps sounded behind Graham, and Jack smirked.

"Looks like I don't have to," said the FBI agent.

Will turned around and saw Hannibal, training a gun on Jack Crawford. If Will hadn't felt apprehensive before, he certainly felt it now.

"What the hell are you doing here?" he muttered through his teeth.

"Keeping my promise," Hannibal said, walking forward. "Hello, Jack."

"Dr. Lecter," Jack said. "Wish I could say it was a pleasure."

"Feeling's mutual." Hannibal cocked the gun. "I suggest you take your sidearm and throw it away."

"And if I don't?"

"You wouldn't want to find out. Trust me."

Will's hands slowly moved his jacket back, fingers brushing the handle of his gun. Jack reached for his sidearm and dropped it to the ground nearby. He seemed unusually calm about the whole thing, which made Will suspicious.

"You won't have the pleasure of getting what you want," Hannibal said. "That I can guarantee you."

"I beg to differ," Jack replied. "I have to admit, it took effort to find you. I'm not leaving empty-handed." His gaze flitted to Graham. "I might take consideration for you, Will. I can't say the same for the Zürich police. They won't hesitate to shoot on sight, and they're already on their way here. You really are making a mistake."

“I have made mistakes before,” Will replied. “This isn’t one of them.”

Jack shook his head, almost in disbelief. “You used to hate him. Hell, you even wanted to kill him. What the hell did he do to change your mind?”

True. But all of that felt like ages ago. Will had gone way past that point, to a place where he and Hannibal had something *real* between them. It wasn’t perfect. Their relationship had bumps in the road, like any other relationship, or perhaps even more. Hannibal still lied to him about some things sometimes.

In the end, though, despite the hurdles, Will was certain that Hannibal cared about him, *really* loved him, as the man had proven it time and time again. Will might not agree with everything he said or did, but he also couldn’t deny that Hannibal truly accepted him, understood him. Going back to Maryland would put him in the same place he was before — lonely, isolated, misunderstood.

“He changed me. For the better,” he said. “I like my life with him. I could never say that when I was in Maryland, living a lie, surrounded by people who could never get me. Never tried. Everyone just needed my expertise. As long as I was useful.”

“So that’s your decision,” Jack said. “It has a huge cost. There’s no turning back from this.”

“I know. I don’t intend on turning back.”

“You’ll be killed.”

“As long as I die with him.”

Hannibal gave Will a sidelong glance. Jack stared at Graham with an apologetic look.

“I’m sorry it had to come to this,” he said. “I really wish you would come home.”

For a second, Jack’s gaze darted elsewhere. Hannibal noticed it, and glanced to where Jack was looking.

Will did too, and caught a glimpse of Detective Fischer trying to sneak up on them, gun pointed right at them.

Jack had been stalling all this time.

What happened next was too fast for Will to register.

“Will!” Hannibal yanked him behind him, his gun snapping up at Elias.

Two gunshots fired at the same time—Hannibal’s bullet hit Elias in the head, and in turn, he received one in the shoulder and dropped to the ground.

Jack darted to his gun but Will responded quickly, whipping his own gun out and shooting him in the leg. Jack yelped and fell to his knees. Graham fired another shot to his hand,

preventing him from grabbing the gun. Elias' partner showed up. Will spotted him just in time to shoot him. The cop's gun went off, but the bullet missed Graham.

Jack groaned and writhed on the ground, bleeding from his leg and his hand. Will didn't have the heart to finish him off, despite everything, because the two of them had once been friends. Instead, he gave him a chance to survive. Besides, Crawford wasn't his priority.

Hannibal was.

Will turned to see him lying there, still and lifeless. The one thing he feared the most seemed to have come true. The same fear eclipsed his thoughts and made his blood run cold. Colder than the weather.

Dropping his gun, he got down to him. "Hannibal." He patted his face. "Hannibal!"

No response. No signs of life.

This was exactly what Will didn't want happening. This was what he wanted to prevent. He wished Hannibal never showed up.

"No... No, no, no." He cradled him in his arms, holding him close. "Hannibal, look at me. Open your eyes and look at me."

He worried if Hannibal's promise included him sacrificing his life for him, because if that was so, then Will didn't want that. He didn't want a life without him.

His lips trembled a little, and he felt the tears flooding his eyes.

"Please." His voice cracked. He brushed Hannibal's hair from his face. "Please... I need you. I know where I want to be, and it's here with you. I want to be with you."

Sirens blared in the distance, getting louder. Will desperately clamped a hand on the bullet wound on Hannibal's shoulder, trying to stem the bleeding.

Unable to hold himself, he broke down in soft sobs, breath shuddering. "Come back to me. Come back. Don't go, please. Don't leave me, Hannibal."

It tortured him to see those closed eyes. He wished they would open, wished those lips would speak. He dropped his head to Hannibal's chest, pleading for him to wake up. He didn't care about the cops showing up. If his beloved died, he wouldn't have anything to live for.

A screech sounded, and Will raised his head to see a black Lexus speeding towards them. He clutched Hannibal tightly, protectively, unwilling to give him up for anyone.

The Lexus came to a halt nearby. Jack was too in pain to react.

Lance McKinnon stepped out of the car, shooting a wide-eyed look at Hannibal.

"Jesus!" he exclaimed, rushing to them. "Get him in!"

Will never thought he'd be this glad to see him. Lance helped him get Hannibal up, putting the wounded man's arm around his shoulder. Will—giving Jack a final glance—got into the backseat of the car before Lance carefully lay Hannibal in there with him, with his head resting on Will's lap.

Shutting the door, Lance got into the front seat and they left the place in a rush.

"How did you know to come here?" Will asked

"Hannibal had called me. Good thing I reached in time," Lance said, looking at Will from the rearview mirror. "I can get to the nearest hospital in ten minutes." He floored the pedal, driving the car at full speed.

Will cradled Hannibal's head, his free hand clamped on his wound.

"Hannibal," he murmured.

There was movement. Though it was slight, it was enough for him. His mouth parted as Hannibal moved his head a little to his side. His eyelids twitched before they opened halfway.

"Will..." he breathed weakly.

"I'm here," Will replied. "Hold on. We're almost at the hospital."

Hannibal slowly placed a hand on his. "I'm okay..."

Will leaned down and kissed his forehead. He honestly wouldn't know what to do if he had lost him for good.

Hannibal's eyes cracked open, much to Will's relief. The latter leaned forward in his chair, holding his hand.

Hannibal's gaze fell on him, and he gave a sleepy smile. "You look tired." His voice sounded hoarse.

"Sleep is a luxury for me," Will said. "I've had better sleep with you in the past month."

"I know. Your nightmares have reduced too."

"If I ever have a nightmare, it's mostly about losing you."

Will dropped his gaze, restraining his emotions, then looked back up at him.

"You won't lose me." Hannibal glanced down at his hospital clothing. "Can't say I agree with the wardrobe though."

Will half-smiled. He wished he could allow himself to laugh.

"Take off your glasses," Hannibal said.

“Thought you liked them.”

“Not when they’re hiding your emotions.”

Will slowly took them off, hesitating before he finally looked at his husband.

Hannibal’s voice lowered. “My sweet darling.” He reached to hold Will’s face. “I’m not going anywhere. I have a survivor’s instinct.”

“You almost died back there trying to protect me.”

“But I didn’t. And if I had to protect you again, I would.”

“I don’t want that. I don’t want you to risk your life for me. I can’t go through that again.”

“You won’t. Like I said, I’m not going anywhere. You can’t get rid of me that easy.”

Will leaned in and pressed his lips to his. When their lips parted with a soft smack, Hannibal gave that contented smile he always gave whenever Will expressed his affections.

“I love you,” Will said, “More than anything.”

“I love you too,” Hannibal replied.

Lance had been greatly helpful with providing false evidence to prove the Chesapeake Ripper wasn’t in Zurich. That he was most likely in Baltimore. It helped that Lance had influence over the entirety of the Zürich police. The blame for the murders—and what happened to Elias—had been put on the killer behind the murders in the woods. His body and that of his partner’s, were moved elsewhere. The evidence Lance fabricated was too convincing to be ignored. As such, Jack Crawford was forced to go back to Maryland empty-handed, since he had no jurisdiction in Zürich.

Hannibal and Will owed Lance big time.

Personally, Will was relieved they got to stay in Switzerland. That they didn’t have to run.

The two of them snuggled under a blanket near the balcony, half-naked in their pajamas. Wrapped in Hannibal’s arms, Will couldn’t stop kissing him. It was a crazy story that of all the people he could ever love, it had to be a literal cannibal. From a broad perspective, it probably wouldn’t make sense, but dive deep, and there were several layers to this story. Nuances of their relationship nobody could understand unless they put themselves in their shoes.

And Will didn’t care about what the world thought. *Normal* had never been a part of his life anyway. He’d gotten used to it. It was enough for him that Hannibal Lecter loved him.

“You seem happy.” Hannibal smiled.

“Why wouldn’t I be?” Will said.

“I probably never expected the reason for your happiness to be me.”

“It’s always been you, Hannibal. If you’ve lived all your life in a certain place and then are suddenly forced to leave it all behind, you’d miss it too. That’s what happened to me. I was feeling homesick for a while. Doesn’t mean you don’t matter.”

“What about now?” With their faces inches apart, Hannibal gently brushed Will’s curls back with his fingers. His other arm was bound around his shoulders. “What do you feel?”

“That I want to live here with you. Till the end. If that’s what you want too.”

Hannibal exhaled softly before kissing those soft lips. “I am wherever you are, Will Graham.”

Will smiled. “You certainly have a way with words.”

“As trite as it sounds, you have a way with my heart.”

They kissed again, deeper this time, their tongues dancing around each other. Bodies pressed firmly, skin to skin. Will leaned over him, running his fingers through his sleek salt-and-pepper hair while *taking* his mouth with fervor.

He broke contact in between, and Hannibal leaned his lips towards his, not wanting the kiss to stop.

“As much as I like kissing you,” Will said. “The coffee’s going to get cold.”

Hannibal glanced at the coffee table nearby where their coffee mugs had been sitting for the past two minutes.

“Right,” he said.

They sat up and took the mugs. Will leaned back against Hannibal’s chest, while the other nuzzled his nose in his dark curls, kissing his head.

This had to be what they called peace, which until now, had been an unattainable thing for them. Will was damn sure his life had changed a lot. The difference between his past and his future was Hannibal. It was just...

Before him and after him.

Chapter End Notes

I didn't think this fic would go this long. Hope you guys liked it :)

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